



In Touch South India

Headlines from the U.S. Consulate General Chennai

March - April, 2005

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Editor's Note:

Our theme this month is 'reaching out.' The fact is, we are reaching out to people on a daily basis. Offering information, services, programs and business advice. Reaching out to people throughout south India, from government officials to business people to students and teachers to visa applicants to American citizens, and everyone in between.

You are reaching out to us as well. We've received many letters since the launch of 'In Touch,' and sincerely hope that 'In Touch' evolves into a more interactive newsletter. Please send us your thoughts and ideas. Want us to reach out? Give us the details.

Until we see you...

Christopher Wurst

Vice Consul for Public Affairs

You said it:

Greetings. It's so nice to know... you were reaching out to the community in need.

Personally I have benefited in conducting my research and teaching. Our college has received many volumes and Journals from the AIRC, which continues to support us in many ways. The newsletter helps to know the latest arrivals on various themes.

Sincerely,
Nageswara Rao
Reader in History
Sir Thegaraya College, Chennai

Greetings!

Gone are the days when diplomacy was people in striped suits exchanging demarches filled with abstract words. Now we face the diplomatic challenge of reaching out to the millions of people in our consular district. We have sought the advice of our staff and our public and responded more and more through India's highly developed news and entertainment media. India and the United States are both countries that take movies very seriously. From the crowds at theaters, the multiple film magazines and the large number of films we each produce a year, it is clear that we share a fascination with the cinema. Films, and more recently television, help to bind each of us together as cultures. It is no accident, then, that the Consulate General in Chennai enjoys great success when we invite audiences to join us to see films dealing with American culture and history. Broadcast television often shows the blockbusters of the past few years, but we have found we can reach out by showing older "classics." We have also enjoyed reaching out through radio and the Internet, where many of our staff has participated in interviews, talk shows and web chats. Television interviews, even on vernacular networks, give us a chance to appear before and interact with large audiences. It's an exciting development and is the theme for this issue of In Touch!



Richard D. Haynes
Consul General for the United States of America



Friday Nights at the Movies...

The Golden Years: Films of the 1930's & 1940's

April 22: Gone With The Wind (1939 - Color: 233 Mins.) —Victor Fleming
May 6: Adam's Rib (1949 - B/W: 101 Mins.) — George Cukor
May 20: The Philadelphia Story (1939 - B/W: 112 Mins.) — George Cukor
June 3: The Magnificent Ambersons (1941- Color: 88 Mins.)—Orson Welles
June 17: Captains Courageous (1937- B/W: 118 Mins.)—Victor Fleming
July 1: The Big Sleep (1946 - B/W: 115 Mins.)—Howard Hawks
July 15: To Have And have Not (1944 - B/W: 100 Mins.)—Howard Hawks

All films at 6:30 PM, The Film Chamber Theater, Gemini Circle, Chennai

Reaching Out...

"I always used to go to your film screenings, it's a pity you don't show as many movies anymore!" We hear this a lot. And, we're overjoyed to report that our new arrangement with the Film Chamber Theater, we will once again be able to dig into our vast film library and screen classic Hollywood films on a regular basis. In fact, we just completed a successful 7-film/6 day festival, and we have two more film packages already lined up!

At the opening of our Black History Month film festival, "The Visible Line," Indian film star, Kamal Haasan, spoke nostalgically



about all of the great American films he'd seen—throughout his life—courtesy of the U.S. Consulate. We've had a relationship with the Madras Film Society (MFS), which celebrates its 50th anniversary next year, for well over 30 years. MFS co-hosted "The Visible Line," which included "Separate But Equal," "Malcolm X," "The Color Purple," and "Ghosts of Mississippi." At the festival's inauguration, Kamal Haasan talked about
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Reaching Out...

REACHING OUT TO LOCAL MUSICIANS



In January, a New York City jazz trio, the Sunny Jain Collective, was in town. With the help of the Public Affairs Section, the trio performed at two local venues, and held a workshop for aspiring musicians. The group—Sunny Jain (percussion), Steve Welsh (tenor saxophone), and Gary Wang (bass)—demystified jazz during their workshop at the Unwind Center. Playing and speaking to over 60 music students and professionals, the group covered the history of jazz as well

as some of its basic musical components. They established instant rapport with the young musicians, sharing their techniques and their infectious enthusiasm for jazz. That night, at the same venue, the trio performed for nearly 300 music fans, playing jazz standards, a jazz-fusion version of “Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram,” and even several Bollywood hits. The group donated CDs to the center, and asked that all sales proceeds be donated to tsunami relief efforts.

REACHING OUT TO FUTURE BUSINESS LEADERS

Barbara Wamsley, a Fellow at John Hopkins University's Center for the Study of American Government, visited Chennai in February. PAS arranged for her to discuss “Leadership in Public Service: Commitment, Accountability, and Empowerment,” to large groups of future management professionals at Asan Memorial Institute of Management and at the Indian Institute of Planning and Management. Wamsley highlighted attributes of effective leadership. She said that the formula she evolved during her long and productive career is that the good outcome of any endeavor is the sum total of mission, vision, expectations, and behavior.

REACHING OUT TO INDIAN EDUCATORS

PAS hosted an ambitious seminar on the “Community College System,” and a workshop on the “Community College Framework in India. Dr. Robert Templin, the president of

Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) came to Chennai to explain several U.S. models, and to advocate that an integrated Associates Degree (based on the U.S. model) could well be the missing link that can integrate Indian secondary education and higher education with vocational training and/or continuing education. University Grants Commission Vice Chairman Rajasekharan Pillai, participated in the conference, and commented that this proposed system could improve India's productivity and bring higher education from the current mark of 6.7% enrolled to more than 20%. More than 200 educators, state government officials, NGOs, and business representatives from all over Tamil Nadu participated.



Left to Right: Dr. Robert Templin, Prof. S.P. Thyagarajan, Dr. V.N.Rajashekara Pillai and Mr. Ravi Candadai.

AIRC REACHING OUT FARTHER, DEEPER, WIDER



AIRC staff with the Principal Dr. Major Syed Shahabuddeen, staff and students of the History and commerce departments at Islamiah College

Our staff at the American Information Resource Center (AIRC) makes outreach a regular part of their routine. They make regular visits to local schools and institutions and semi-regular out-

of-town trips to spread the word about all of the AIRC's offerings. In January, they traveled to Vaniyambadi, Thirupattur and Ambur, in the hinterland of Tamil Nadu, meeting with students and educators at five colleges, including three predominantly Muslim schools. In a 48-hour period, they met with over 1000 people. Last month, AIRC staff visited a college on the outskirts of Chennai, meeting with 400+ humanities students, most from rural backgrounds. The research opportunities provided to students by the AIRC are fantastic—and to many students an eye opening surprise. The AIRC also reaches out to businesses; recently they met with the Chennai Indo-American Chamber of Commerce, to discuss how they can better keep their members informed about electronic and print business and management resources available at the AIRC.

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sneaking into Consulate film screenings as a boy, starved for any Hollywood movies he could find. CG Haynes and South Indian Film Chamber President Sudarsana Srinivasan also participated. The festival attracted more than 1500 people.

Starting on April 22, we'll begin a three-month program, with film shown every other Friday night. The theme is “Golden Years: Films of the 1930's & 1940's.” Moreover, from June 20-25, we will feature another big festival—this time “Hollywood in the 1970's.” In August we'll start another series of bi-weekly screenings, on so on! You get the idea...we're back in the film business!

REACHING OUT TO...TASTE BUDS?!

On January 29, 2005, CG Richard Haynes and DPAO Christopher Wurst taped a segment of Star Vijay TV's popular cooking show, "Samayal Samayal, Kitchen Killadigal" ("Cooking, Cooking, the Kitchen Experts"). The show, which is broadcast in Tamil, and seen in over 50 million homes, made a language exception to allow the two officers to appear, each cooking an American dish (their comments were translated on the spot by the show's host). "Samayal..." which is hosted by a popular Tamil soap opera star, Aishwarya, draws a huge midday audience throughout the region and has featured many stars. The CG fixed stovetop biscuits. In an attempt to show south Indians that American food cannot be dismissed as bland, the DPAO fixed spicy garden vegetable chili. The chili and Tabasco content was sufficient to clear the sinuses of most of the TV crew after the shoot. The host often puts guests on the spot to sing traditional songs, and in this case the officers performed a rousing duet of "I've Been Working on



the Railroad." This was a wonderful, lighthearted, and casual exercise in mutual understanding. During the course of the show, the CG spoke about his background in Sanskrit and his knowledge of Indian dance, and the DPAO compared south Indian food to American and other international food. (AIRS on April 2nd at 1:00 p.m.)

ADJUSTED CONSULAR FEES & SERVICES

Effective February 14, 2005: The consular exchange rate has been adjusted to US\$1 = Rs. 44. This applies to all consular fees. The adjusted Rupees fees are:

- Non-Immigrant Visa application processing fee Rs. 4,400
- Non-immigrant Visa issuance fee Rs. 2,200

Effective March 8, 2005: A new \$12 (Rs. 528) surcharge will be added to current U.S. Passport application fees:

- U.S. Passport applications (children under 16) Rs. 3,608
(\$70 + 12 = \$82)
- U.S. Passport application (adult renewal) Rs. 2,948
(\$55 + 12 = \$67)
- U.S. Passport application (adult lost/stolen/etc.) Rs. 4,268
(\$85 + 12 = \$97)
- Notary seal Rs. 1,320 (\$30)

Starting March 8, 2005, persons applying for "blanket" L-1 visas in India must pay a \$500 (Rs. 22,000) "fraud prevention and detection fee" at the time they make their visa application. Only the principal applicant needs to pay this fee. This must be in the form of a bank draft to the American Consulate General.

--A surcharge of \$45 (Rs. 1980) will be added to the current fees for Immigrant Visas making the new total fee \$380 (Rs. 16,720)

--The fee for issuing a transportation letter for Legal Permanent Resident Aliens to reenter the U.S. from abroad has been reduced from \$300 to \$165 (Rs. 7260).



We work with the Indian media all the time, giving information, providing press release, doing web chats, doing press conferences, and regularly championing south Indian journalists for International Visitor exchange programs. But every now and then a unique opportunity arises, allowing us to do something very special for the media. Such was the case at last month's Aero India International Air Show, held in Bangalore. The day before the air show began; we organized a press conference with U.S. Ambassador David Mulford and several high-ranking Air Force and Navy officers. The media turnout was great, and the coverage was generous and well balanced. So too was the coverage of the Ambassador inaugurating the American Pavilion (see photo). So it was wonderful, three days later, to be able to offer reporters and photographers unlimited access to the five aircraft on display as well as their American crews. When the reporters turned up on the tarmac they could not believe that they could go on board, take photos, and interview pilots and crewmembers, with no holds barred. The media representatives got to board the P-3C Orion, the KC-135 Stratotanker, and the C-130J Hercules. The crews patiently and candidly explained their experiences and challenges, showed off some of the planes' high technology features, and encouraged the reporters to take turns sitting in the cockpits (see photo). When the reporters came to the main event—the F-15E Strike Eagle—they discovered one of the pilots was an Indian American whose family had come from Hyderabad. Everybody left with good anecdotes, and filed good stories.



Reaching Out...

Note: Dr. Richard Haynes will depart Chennai in May to prepare for his next posting, in the Philippines.

CW: Dr. Haynes, judging from the content in this issue, Consulate General Chennai never sleeps! What's it like to be in charge of such a busy place?

RH: There is always something new happening at the Consulate. Our staff has almost doubled in size during the past three years and CDC, FCS, environmental and Public Affairs programs keep expanding. The number of visas our Consulate issues keeps increasing, and we have to find new ways to meet that demand. We've built new interview windows and have asked for funds to build even more. It seems like construction never stops; we are constantly looking for office space for our ever-increasing staff. The variety and complexity of our programs keeps growing as well. We have been active with the various business chambers of commerce, with NGOs working on air, water and other environmental issues, with governments and medical institutions to improve education, treatment and care in HIV/AIDS, and with educational circles to establish tie-ups with U.S. educational institutions.

CW: What are the accomplishments during your tenure here that you take the most pride in?

RH: We have managed to serve vastly greater numbers of people than ever before. Our web chats, radio and TV appearances, work with the print media, speeches to business and student groups, travel to almost every city in our district and our growing cooperation with both government and NGO circles has introduced us to more South Indians than ever before. Although our ability to speak South Indian languages varies considerably within the Consulate, vernacular media remains interested in talking to us, even if they have to translate what we say. I have seen closer ties between the Consulate and South India where we want to be good neighbors and helpful partners in the development and change all around us.

CW: This is your third tour in India (after Calcutta and New Delhi). In all your time here, what changes in India strike you as most profound?

RH: Communications and transportation have improved so much. Cell phones are everywhere along with many new planes, trains and highways. However, that change has not erased the delightful regional differences that make India so stimulating. No matter where you go, you can probably find a Punjabi Dhaba, a Bengali sweet shop and Hyderabad biriyani. When I first came to India, fruits and vegetables were pretty much limited to what was in season wherever you were. Now, because of improved shipping, mangos, for instance, are available many months of the year. Better transportation and communications have also increased internal tourism. This

means some of the old tourist spots are crowded during the May school break, but also that some of the smaller, less-known tourist gems now have a chance to show their sparkle. There is so much to see and do here, and now it is easier than ever.

CW: What lasting impression of Chennai will you take with you?

RH: Before I came, I was told that Chennai was "conservative" and had a "slow pace of life." I was astounded to find how cosmopolitan a city it is. The music and dance are famous, of course, but include fusion and experimentation as well as traditional forms. Kollywood is alive and well, but in addition audiences here now can watch the most modern, world films in a digital format. South India has been reaching out to the world for thousands of years - I saw Tamil inscriptions at Angkor Wat - and it shows in the varied, sophisticated art, media, manufacturing, textiles and information technology that flows from Chennai to the world.

CW: If you were to come back to India in ten years, what do you expect you'd find, in terms of the Indo-US relationship?

RH: So many Indians have traveled to the U.S. or have relatives there, that I expect the personal relationships between our two societies will become stronger and stronger.

The large, bi-lateral issues are working themselves out. But the big change I think we will see ten years from now will be on the family level. Ordinary Americans will have neighbors from India and Indian families will all have some member in the U.S.

CW: In terms of economic issues?

I think there will be vast changes in retail trade and food processing. There will be some big department stores. However, they will not put the neighborhood shop out of business but energize it through vast increases in the variety and quality of the goods for sale.

CW: In terms of culture?

RH: I think the ease of communication and transportation will increase the variety of regional culture displayed throughout India. There will be interest in "discovering" and "showcasing" culture (painting, dance, music, theater, design, food) that develops from the village or small city and spreading it through films, CDs, live performances and workshops.

CW: What's next for you?

RH: I move on to Manila, where we have a large Embassy and broad shared interests. I am so comfortable in India that adjusting to that new culture will be work. But, life is about change, and I look forward to the challenge.

CW: Thank you—and good luck. Thanks you especially for all of your support for 'In Touch.' We will miss you.

